

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strike through~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1-8 and ADD new claims 9-17 in accordance with the following:

1. (currently amended) A multi-throttle apparatus, comprising:
a throttle body that defines a plurality of intake passages corresponding to respective engine cylinders;
a plurality of throttle valves that are disposed respectively in said plurality of intake passages;
a throttle shaft that supports said plurality of throttle valves to be simultaneously opened/closed;
drive means that includes a motor ~~that~~ for rotatably ~~drives~~ driving said throttle shaft; and
a return spring that returns said throttle valves to a predetermined angular position, ~~characterized in that~~
wherein said drive means is disposed to apply a driving force to said throttle shaft at a location in a mutual interval close to the center, said mutual interval being one of mutual intervals between said throttle valves disposed at a plurality of locations, said return spring is disposed close to a location to which the driving force of said drive means is applied, and said throttle body includes bearings that support said throttle shaft in said plurality of mutual intervals between said intake passages.
2. (currently amended) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said throttle shaft comprises two throttle shafts separated by the area as a border to which the driving force of said drive means is applied, and said two throttle shafts are connected so as to rotate coaxially and integrally.
3. (currently amended) A multi-throttle apparatus, comprising:

a throttle body that defines a plurality of intake passages corresponding to respective engine cylinders;_i

a plurality of throttle valves that are disposed respectively in said plurality of intake passages;_i

a throttle shaft that supports said plurality of throttle valves to be simultaneously opened/closed;_i

drive means that includes a motor ~~that~~ for rotatably ~~drives~~ driving said throttle shaft;_i and

a return spring that returns said throttle valves to a predetermined angular position, characterized in that

wherein said drive means is disposed to apply a driving force to said throttle shaft at a location on one end of said throttle valves disposed at a plurality of locations, said return spring is disposed close to a location to which the driving force of said drive means is applied, and said throttle body includes a bearing that supports said throttle shaft in said mutual interval between said intake passages.

4. (currently amended) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 1 or 3, ~~wherein any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that~~ said return spring includes a plurality of return springs that are disposed along said throttle shaft, and apply energizing forces different from each other, and a return spring of said plurality of return springs that applies the largest energizing force is disposed close to the location to which the driving force of said drive means is applied.

5. (currently amended) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 1 or 3, ~~wherein any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that~~ said throttle body is comprised of a plurality of throttle bodies that respectively define said plurality of intake passages, and are connected to each other in the direction in which said throttle shaft extends, and said plurality of throttle bodies comprise an engagement section that engages said bearing.

6. (currently amended) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 5, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ said plurality of throttle bodies are connected with each other via a spacer that adjusts the mutual separated distance.

7. (currently amended) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 6, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ said spacer is formed so as to fix said bearing to said throttle body.

8. (currently amended) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 1 or 3, wherein any one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that said plurality of throttle valves are formed such that the cross section thereof tapers off to the tip thereof as departed from the rotation center.

9. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said return spring includes a plurality of return springs that are disposed along said throttle shaft, and apply energizing forces different from each other, and a return spring of said plurality of return springs that applies the largest energizing force is disposed close to the location to which the driving force of said drive means is applied.

10. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said throttle body is comprised of a plurality of throttle bodies that respectively define said plurality of intake passages, and are connected to each other in the direction in which said throttle shaft extends, and said plurality of throttle bodies comprise an engagement section that engages said bearing.

11. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said throttle body is comprised of a plurality of throttle bodies that respectively define said plurality of intake passages, and are connected to each other in the direction in which said throttle shaft extends, and said plurality of throttle bodies comprise an engagement section that engages said bearing.

12. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said plurality of throttle bodies are connected with each other via a spacer that adjusts the mutual separated distance.

13. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said plurality of throttle bodies are connected with each other via a spacer that adjusts the mutual separated distance.

14. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said spacer is formed so as to fix said bearing to said throttle body.

15. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said spacer is formed so as to fix said bearing to said throttle body.

16. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said spacer is formed so as to fix said bearing to said throttle body.

17. (new) The multi-throttle apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said spacer is formed so as to fix said bearing to said throttle body.